

The Progress of Life

(Copyright 1921 by W. O. Summers and John Saliba.)
By DR. JOHN SALIBA

(This then is the sixth installment and the fifth article of a series of biological monographs prepared for this newspaper by an interesting student of life. The series began with "A Survey of the Variety, Power and Majesty of Life." This week Dr. Saliba treats of the Progress of Life. Next week he will take up other phases of The Progress of Life.)

The doctrine of organic evolution implies that the present is the child of the past and the parent of the future, that the forms of life around us have been derived by long-continued processes of change from ancestors on the whole simpler and more generalized. It suggests a mode of origin, a process of becoming, a progress, or it may be in some cases a retrogression.

The formula of evolution is applicable to all orders of facts—from the solar system to human institution.

The following is a brief survey of different sets of facts which lead to the formulation of the general evolution idea.

1. A careful study of plants and animals discloses a maze of relationship to which here and there the genetic clue has been found.

2. The evidence derived from the structure of animals—Morphology—that the same material of bone, muscle and nerve are seen twisted and fashioned into manifold forms—for example in the fore and hind limbs of vertebrates.

3. The occurrence of rudimentary organs, or the persistence of traces of structures in organisms where they seem of little moment, though they are essential organs in other organisms of lower degree.

4. The study of development shows in a few days or weeks or months an individual progress from the fertilized egg cell to the finished form—a process in which each step seems to condition and determine the next, in which obvious complexity is evolved from apparent simplicity.

5. "The young creature climbs its own ancestral tree" is proved by the study of the development of an animal in its early, or embryonic stage. If we assume, for instance, a fish-like form in the ancestry of man, many facts of the human embryo become intelligent at once. So also at certain early stages in the embryonic life of the anthropoid apes and of man we find a similarity—including in both cases, the formation of a tail which afterwards practically disappears—so striking and detailed that we can not resist drawing the only possible inference.

6. Careful observations have shown the plasticity of the organism, as an individual under the moulding influence of environment and function, and as a race when we compare with precision the members of successive generations.

7. The geological record, written on the earth's rocks, extending back for millions of years, shows the gradual convergence of higher and higher forms of life.

Every living individual is a double being, half paternal, half maternal, in origin and constitution. It is at once old and new, one of a multitudinous species, and yet, unique, because of its double origin in two cells which have never met before and will never meet again. The new creature resembles its parents, because it is developed from the same kind of germ-cells as they were; and yet it exhibits variations and does not exactly resemble its parents, because it is developed from a unique combination of germ-cells and therefore must be its original self.

At one time scientists could not regard the theory of organic evolution, as proved so long as species remained incapable of mating with each other to form new species.

The products of two different species are called hybrids, and it appeared to be a constant rule that hybrids are sterile, such as the mule. But in the light of new knowledge hybrids are by no means necessarily sterile, and, even when they are, the sterility may only be due to accidental circumstances of structure, and not to any inherent disability of the hybrid to reproduce itself. In fact, many hybrid forms can be bred and found to breed true, so that new races can be created.

Evolution is an ancient conception. Five hundred years before our Christian era the Greek Thales, the Indian Buddha and the Sicilian Empedocles were among the early believers in this doctrine.

Thales thought everything evolved from water.

Buddha's teachings formed the basis of a great system of ethics. Buddha's view and ours today are the same, namely, all the forms of life are one. Buddha taught that the highest forms of life, which are human, are rewarded for their goodness in a Nirvana—re-absorption into the infinite being. But if they have no virtue and there is no goodness in them they become degraded, and their existence is continued in the life of a humbler form of being, say, a cat, a dog or a pig. The humbler forms of life are capable of ascending to higher forms; and, therefore, on account of what they may become than on account of what they are, we must consider them, as sacred and take no life at all.

Empedocles was the first to state the theory, which nearly twenty-five centuries later Darwin called natural selection, that many races of living things have made a bid for existence, but "have died out, and been unable to beget and continue their breed."

Aristotle, the father of natural history, thought the earliest forms of life are simple and soft, and that from them animals and plants must have sprung.

Lucretius, the Roman poet, declared the natural origin of life from the earth. In his classic poem "On the nature of things" he says: "Under the influence of rain and the heat of the sun," wherefore the earth with good title has gotten and keeps the name of "mother."

Kant, an illustrious thinker of the eighteenth century, half Scotchman and half German, included in his published "Theory of the Heavens" what is now called the theory of organic evolution. He observed how so many animals seem to be built on a common plan. This, he says, "strengthens the supposition that they have an actual blood relationship, due to derivation from a common parent a supposition which is arrived at by observation . . . extending from man down to the polyps, and from these even down to mosses and lichens, and arriving finally at raw matter, the lowest stage of nature observable by us.

"From this raw matter and its forces, the whole apparatus of nature seems to have been derived, according to mechanical laws (such as those which resulted in the production of crystals); yet this apparatus, as seen in organic beings, is so incomprehensible to us that we feel ourselves compelled to conceive for it a different principle."

Buffon, a Frenchman, contemporary of Kant, is the author of the idea of the spontaneous evolution of life in the water of the Polar Ocean, unthinkable ages ago.

He was an evolutionist and suggested that the horse and the ass, as also the ape and man, may have a common ancestry.

He explained "Ancestral relics" by the theory of descent. He spoke of species "being perfected or degenerated by the great changes in land and sea, by the favours or disfavour of nature, by food, by the prolonged influences of climate, contrary or favourable."

Goethe of Germany, Saint Hilaire of France and Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin, of England, are men who hold similar views that all the forms of life have a common origin; and who came to the same conclusion on the origin of species at about the same time, in the year 1714-15.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR THE REORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOLS IN CURRITUCK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

This study of conditions of the school system of the County of Currituck, with suggestions for its improvement, is made at the request of the county board of education. It is inspired by the desire of the board to adopt a consistent policy as to buildings, organization, course of study, supervision, and instruction, which provides for present and future needs of the children and gives due consideration to modern educational standards and ideals.

It is recognized that it may not be possible to meet immediately all the recommendations. But, it is possible to make gradual changes in harmony with the accomplishment of the ultimate plan for an efficient school system, and to avoid useless expenditure of money in temporary expedients which retard rather than further educational progress.

This inquiry aims to consider the system of schools for white children as it is and as it should be, in order to accord with progressive ideas and to offer the best possible educational advantages to the greatest number of children. It recognizes obstacles with which the county board must contend and aims to recommend the best and most economical means for improvement.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE REORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOLS IN CURRITUCK COUNTY, N. C.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

Currituck County is located in the northeastern part of North Carolina, on the Atlantic coast. It is a peninsula, triangular in shape, 40 miles long, 14 miles wide at the north end, narrowing to 5 miles in the southern portion. It contains about 276 square miles. Besides the mainland, it includes several islands. Currituck Sound and the North River bound it on three sides. It joins Virginia on the north.

The soil is fertile; the leading crops are soy beans, cow peas, corn, potatoes, melons and cotton. Potatoes particularly have brought splendid returns during the last few years. There are 984 farms in the county. The population is entirely rural. Practically all the people are engaged in farming or fishing. Hunting, while the regular occupation of only a few of the people, draws many to the county for recreation. A number of hunting clubs are located along the coast or on the islands. Currituck is the county seat, and Moyock, the largest trading center; neither of these villages contains more than a few hundred people. The majority of the white farmers own their farms.

The county is old in history and tradition. Only a short distance to the south is Roanoke Island, where Raleigh made the first white settlement in the United States, in 1585, and where Virginia Dare was born. The white population is almost entirely of native birth and parentage. Most of the people are descendants of families who have made their homes in the county for many generations.

The total population is about 7,000, of which 60 per cent is white. The school census for 1919-20 was 2,748, of whom 74 per cent, or 2,080, were enrolled in school, and 72 per cent, or 1,494, in average daily attendance. The school population, enrollment, and attendance have not changed materially during the past five years.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHOOLS

Currituck County conforms with the North Carolina plan in the administration of its schools. Nominally the county unit of organization prevails. There is a county board of education elected by the legislature, with considerable power and important duties, one of which is selection of the county superintendent. The county board also has general supervision over the schools of the county, the power to veto the selection of teachers, to locate buildings, to change district lines, and, by recent legislation, to consolidate school districts. Until this was enacted the county board could not carry out a program for consolidating the schools and reorganizing the system. Six districts which failed to levy a special tax have prevented this, with the result that actual conditions resemble more nearly those which prevail under the district unit plan of administration. In the special-tax districts school buildings are better, the term longer, and salaries of teachers higher than in the nontax districts. In the latter there are only such school facilities as satisfy the minimum requirements prescribed by State law and are furnished by State and county funds.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.

The white children of the county are taught by 48 teachers. They attend school in 20 school buildings as follows: Nine, one-teacher; four, two-teacher; four, three-teacher; one, four-teacher; one, five-teacher; and one, nine-teacher building. Of these, 15 schools have a school term of six months only; 2, seven months, the additional one month financed by private subscription; the three consolidated district levy a special tax large enough to provide for a term of eight months.

In four of the schools some work of secondary grade is done. There is one accredited high school at Poplar Branch. At two other schools, Moyock and Currituck, four years' work of secondary grade is offered, but only one teacher in each school devotes full time to it. The school equipment is very meager, and there are practically no library facilities in the county. Poplar Branch has a few reference books and some laboratory equipment. The organization follows the North Carolina plan of seven elementary and four high-school grades.

SUPPORT

It is apparently the intent of the North Carolina law that schools should be supported from State, county, and district funds in about equal proportion; that is, each contributing approximately one-third the cost of the school. But this ideal is not followed fully in the management of the schools of Currituck County. The budget for the present school year indicates that, of the total expenditure (exclusive of borrowed money), the State is supplying about 59 per cent, the county 26 per cent, and the local districts 15 per cent.

As compared with the county and local district the State's support is generous. The State is by no means contributing too much. North Carolina is rich. It ranks eighth among the 48 States in the payment of direct Federal taxes. It has, by far, the largest per capita income of any State, and the policy that education is a State function and has assumed certain responsibilities toward carrying this out. The county and especially the local district are contributing entirely too little. They are not assuming the proportion of total support contemplated by the law. The total amount spent for education is therefore altogether inadequate.

For the year 1919-20 the per capita cost based on enrollment was \$11 per year for each child enrolled in elementary and high schools. The average cost in the United States for 1918 was \$36.62, varying in the different States from approximately \$10 in North Carolina to \$76 in Montana. During the years 1919 and 1920 expenditures in schools throughout the country increased materially. While complete data are not available, returns so far received by the Bureau of Education, as well as a study of certain communities made by the Russell Sage Foundation indicate that the increase in 1919 over that of 1918 was about 14 per cent and that of 1920 over that of 1919 about 33 per cent. If this estimate is correct, the comparison for 1920 is about as follows: The United States as a whole, \$55.56, varying from \$15.16 to \$115.25 as among the 48 States; for Currituck County, \$11—very far below the average for the United States and below the average for North Carolina.

Next year the present limitation on county millage will be removed and the county tax can be increased. It is impossible to tell at this time whether the amount received from the State will be larger or not. But in any case the local district can appropriate more money and should at least match the county in the amount of its contribution.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

The need for more money is apparent in the general appearance and equipment of the school buildings. With the exception of those at Poplar Branch and Currituck, they are either too small or otherwise unfit for schools. Even these two are not entirely satisfactory. According to the Strayer rural-school building score card, neither scores more than 650 on a scale of 1,000 points. Water for drinking and washing, some means of fire protection, and sanitary toilets, are needed badly in both. The heating plant in Currituck School, not now used, should be repaired. Both need cement walks and other similar improvements. There is also need either for a good janitor or other definite provision for keeping rooms clean and in a better state of repair.

In all of the others, especially the one-room buildings, various unsanitary and unhealthy conditions menace the safety of the children. In a number of schools there are unsupported, ill-fitted joints of stovepipe, unprotected chimneys, and other careless arrangements which offer constant danger from fire. Five schools have no toilets, and several others only one. All toilets are in bad condition. Practically all of the schoolrooms are either unnecessarily large or too small to accommodate the children. In the school buildings having more than one room thin partitions, some reaching only half way to the ceiling, and in one case curtains, separate groups of children. Even reasonable order and the quiet necessary for school work are not possible in such conditions. There are few cloakrooms, no closets, many double desks, and homemade benches. Lighting space is only one-tenth or one-twentieth of floor space in several

rooms, instead of one-fourth or one-fifth, as it should be. Windows are on four sides in most of the one-room buildings; properly placed windows and enough light are provided only in the Currituck School. Nearly all buildings are in poor condition. They are rarely scrubbed or carefully cleaned. There is little equipment beyond the bare necessities. There are no libraries or supplementary books for reading, history, or geography, and no illustrative material in the elementary schools; there is very little blackboard space and that of poor quality. In many cases blackboards are plain boards with paint almost or entirely worn off. Only two schools have any playground equipment. There are pianos in only four.

THE TEACHERS.

The salaries paid white teachers in the county are shown in Table 1. They vary from \$390 to \$800 per year, salaries of principals not included. Teachers who do not live at home pay board at the rate of \$30 or \$35 per month. The salaries paid for six or eight months must cover living expenses for the 12 months of the year, as well as expense for books, travel, attendance at summer schools, and other means of self-improvement. Prepared teachers can not be expected to work for salaries so small. There are, of course, other considerations, such as satisfactory living places, good working conditions, proximity to one's home, and the like. A few teachers will remain in the county because their homes are in it or near by, but the majority need the inducement of better salaries as well as more satisfactory working conditions.

Table 1.—Salaries of white teachers in Currituck County.

School term, in months.	Number of teachers.	Salary per month.	Salary per year.	School term, in months.	Number of teachers.	Salary per month.	Salary per year.
6	3	\$65	\$390	7	1	\$85	\$505
6	4	75	450	7	3	95	565
6	2	90	540	8	2	90	720
6	1	80	480	8	2	78	624
6	7	85	510	8	4	85	680
6	3	95	570	8	1	95	760
6	2	100	600	8	3	100	800
6	1	105	630	8	2	105	840
6	1	125	750	8	1	110	880
6	1	150	900	8	*2	200	*1,600
6½	1	95	617½	8	**1	225	**1,800

*Principals, \$1,600.

**Principals, \$1,800.

Table 2.—Per cent of teachers receiving certain salaries.

Annual Salary	Number of teachers receiving.	Per cent receiving.	Cumulative per cent.
\$400 or less	3	7	7
\$400 to \$500	5	11	18
\$500 to \$600	19	42	60
\$600 to \$700	7	15½	75½
\$700 to \$800	7	15½	91
\$800 to \$900	4	9	100

Total

45

100

Classroom Work.

Teachers of the county give, on the whole, the impression of dignity, pleasing personality, and interest in their work. They lack definite preparation, unity of purpose, and well-defined standards of method and accomplishment. The majority of teachers are fairly well qualified as to general education, but few have professional preparation. Table 3 shows this in detail.

Of the 48 white teachers (including 3 principals) employed, 9 are graduates of normal schools; 1 has three years of higher education; and 5 have been graduated from college. More than half the teachers, 54 per cent, have no training in addition to high-school work, and about one-third of these, or one-sixth of the total number, have not completed a full four-year high-school course.

Of the total number of teachers in the county, 18 per cent are teaching for the first time; 28 per cent have had no experience or only one year of experience before coming into the county; the remainder have from two to four or more years of experience in teaching.

Table 3.—Education of teachers in Currituck County.

Number of teachers having—	
Elementary education only	1
One year of high-school training	1
Two years of high-school training	2
Three years of high-school training	4
Four years of high-school training (graduates)	18
One year in addition to high-school training	7
Two years in addition to high-school training (normal-school graduates)	9
Three years in addition to high-school training	1
Four years in addition to high-school training (college graduates)	5
Total	48

The length of time the teachers remain in the county and in the school is important, as well as their preparation and experience. At the present time 82 per cent are teaching for the first time in their present positions. A few are teaching the second year, and only one has spent more than three years in the school in which now employed. This annual turnover of the teaching corps—for the condition described is not confined to the present year, as examination of the records show—is perhaps the worst feature governing the efficiency of teaching in the county. The turnover is always important, but especially so when close supervision is impossible. There is continuity of neither practice nor procedure; nor is it possible for teachers who change every term of six or eight months to become familiar with the needs of the school and the progress of the children. Regardless of any consideration of the qualifications of teachers, the change in itself is a distinct loss to the progress of the children. It tends to make the county schools training schools for more or less inexperienced or indifferent teachers. Those who are successful soon leave and give the benefit of their experience to other communities.

THE SCHOOL TERM.

The school term varies in length from six to eight months, with an average of 127 days for the white schools of the county. In 15 schools the term is six months, in 2, seven; and in 3, eight. The special district levy is used for the purpose of paying teachers' salaries for the additional one or two months when held and for supplementing the regular salary paid by the State and County for the full term. This use of the funds is commendable, but the amount for the full term is inadequate. The standard school term should not be less than nine months. Several States now have an average term of 180 days. In North Carolina 43 counties had a longer average term than Currituck County in 1918. The average for the cities of the State was 165 days, nearly two months longer than in Currituck County.

(To be continued next week.)

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION.

Having qualified as Administrator of the late John A. Overman, I hereby give notice to all persons indebted to his estate to come forward and make immediate settlement, and those holding claims against the same to present them for payment within twelve months from the date of this notice, or it will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

J. S. OVERMAN,
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